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Security Council

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Thursday, 16 December 2010, 10.25 a.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Rice	(United States of America)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić/Ms. Čolaković
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Wang Min/Mr. Yang Tao
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Issoze-Ngondet
	Japan	Mr. Nishida
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Mexico	Mr. Puente
	Nigeria	Mr. Onemola
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. Apakan
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 37 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Mutrif Siddiq, State Minister at the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs of the Sudan.

It is so decided.

On behalf of the Security Council, I extend invitations under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, Chair of the Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan.

It is so decided.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Pagan Amum, Secretary General of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement.

It is so decided.

After consultations among Council members, I have been authorized to make the following statement on their behalf.

"The Security Council welcomes the Sudanese parties' reaffirmations of their commitment to full and timely implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), and reaffirms its strong support for the parties' efforts in this regard. The Security Council welcomes the conclusion of a peaceful registration process for the Southern Sudan referendum in the Sudan, and encourages the parties to continue this forward momentum towards peaceful and credible referendums held on January 9, 2011, that reflect the will of the people. The Council strongly urges the CPA parties to promptly fulfil their remaining commitments to finance the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission and the Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau.

"The Security Council reaffirms its support for the United Nations Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan, led by President Benjamin Mkapa, and welcomes its work, including its December 9, 2010, statement noting that the registration process provides the basis for a credible referendum. The Council extends its appreciation for the efforts of international and domestic observers.

"The Security Council notes with deep concern the absence of an agreement on Abyei. The Security Council strongly urges the parties to calm rising tensions in Abyei, to urgently reach agreement on Abyei and other outstanding CPA issues and to resolve critical post-referendum issues, including the border, security, citizenship, debts, assets, currency and natural resources. The Council welcomes the work of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel, led by former South African President Thabo Mbeki, and its continuing efforts in this regard.

"The Security Council reiterates its call for all parties to cooperate fully with the United Nations Mission in the Sudan in the discharge of its mandate, specifically with respect to protection of civilians and to granting unhindered access and freedom of movement.

"The Security Council reiterates the urgent need for the parties to provide immediate and ongoing reassurance to people of all nationalities in the Sudan, so that their rights, safety and property will be respected whatever the outcome of the referendums, and the urgent need to focus on the security and protection of minorities, including Southerners in the North and Northerners in the South. The Security Council urges the parties to ensure that citizenship and residency arrangements are in accordance with applicable international obligations and to refrain from arbitrarily depriving an individual of citizenship. The Council urges the CPA parties to respect their obligations.

"The Council stresses the importance of inclusive, timely and credible popular consultations processes in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states, in accordance with the CPA. The

Council also stresses the need for Southern Kordofan state-level elections to be held in accordance with the timeline established by the National Elections Commission.

"The Security Council underlines that, whatever the outcome of the referendums, continued cooperation between the CPA parties will remain essential. The Council stresses the importance of the parties abiding by the commitments recorded in the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel statement of 15 November, including to find peaceful solutions to all outstanding matters, to never resort to war again, and that neither party should take any action or support any group that would undermine the security of the other.

"The Council is deeply concerned about the recent military incidents in the Kiir River Valley and the subsequent displacement of civilians, and urges all parties to exercise restraint, avoiding escalation.

"The Security Council reaffirms its support for the African Union-United Nations-led peace process for Darfur, hosted by the Government of Qatar. The Council strongly urges all rebel movements to join the peace process without further delay or preconditions.

"The Council reiterates the importance of increased participation of women in the Sudanese peace processes. The Security Council reiterates its deep concern about the increases in violence and insecurity in Darfur, including recently in Khor Abeche, such as ceasefire violations, attacks by rebel groups, increased intertribal fighting, attacks on humanitarian personnel and peacekeepers and aerial bombardment by the Government of the Sudan.

"The Council recalls the importance it attaches to an end to impunity and to justice for crimes committed in Darfur. The Council reiterates its willingness to consider measures against any party whose actions undermine peace in the Sudan."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2010/28.

I now give the floor to Mr. Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

Mr. Le Roy (*spoke in French*): Less than 24 days before the date set for the referendums, we are at the most critical stage of the peace process. The determination of the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) to achieve peace, stability and coexistence will be the decisive factor. The United Nations and the international community will of course continue to strongly support the parties, the institutions involved and the Sudanese people throughout the peace process and beyond.

With regard to the referendum in Southern Sudan, notable progress has been made. Voter registration took place from 15 November to 8 December. The process has generally gone well, without major disturbances or violent incidents. The Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan, represented here by Mr. Mkapa and responsible for observing the referendums in the Southern Sudan and Abyei, has concluded that the registration process was both transparent and free of any organized fraud.

The Southern Sudan Referendum Commission is in the process of compiling voter lists. According to the latest unofficial published by the Commission, more that 115,000 people were registered in the North of Sudan and more than 2.9 million in Southern Sudan. To clarify, however, this figure is based on only 60 per cent of the voter registration centres in Southern Sudan, so the final figure will clearly be between 3 and 4 million voters.

Voter registration was also completed on 8 December in Australia, Canada, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Great Britain. The Commission has adjusted the electoral timetable for other centres that opened later, such that three centres in Egypt will close on 18 December and five centres in the United States will close on 22 December. The number of those on the list in the eight countries other than the Sudan now stands at more than 57,000 voters.

Preparations for the 9 January referendum itself are also under way. Necessary equipment has been obtained. Electoral equipment has arrived in the Sudan and is being distributed. Additional staff has been found for the voting centres, and their training began on 13 December. Data collection centres in Khartoum and Juba are operational. Voting and vote-counting procedures, as well as plans for announcing the results, are now being finalized.

At the same time, however, the Commission is continuing to encounter difficulties in obtaining the necessary funds as promised by the Government. The two Governments must urgently provide the funding required and fulfil their responsibilities in organizing the referendum.

Despite the tight schedule, the success of the voter registration is an example of what the North and the South can achieve when they work together. It is vital that the parties continue their efforts and maintain a political environment favourable to holding a free referendum without violence.

In order to ensure a smooth transition at the end of the referendum process and the interim period, the parties must agree on the key issues for the post-referendum period, including resource-sharing, the management of capital and debt, citizenship and border security arrangements. It is vital that the parties reach a framework agreement on those issues before the referendums are held. Progress has recently been made in the negotiations, facilitated by the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel with the support of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS), the United States and other international partners.

The outcome of the negotiations will have significant implications for a number of the stakeholders. For example, one of the most serious issues is that of citizenship. Possible changes in the status of property rights will also be a major concern for Southern Sudanese living in the North and Northern Sudanese living in the South.

The current stalemate on the question of Abyei is of major concern. We are particularly concerned by the lack of any progress in setting up the referendum commission for Abyei and the discussions by the parties on the future status of Abyei. Despite some apparent progress under the auspices of the High-Level Implementation Panel, no agreement has yet been reached and tension is growing on the ground.

Political sensitivities and historical complexities related to the issue of Abyei make it even more delicate for one of the parties to consider options that could be seen by their constituents as being concessions. Given this, the parties cannot allow themselves not to resolve this issue. Tensions and frustration on the ground will only increase, and that will make the issue of Abyei more difficult to resolve, particularly because the migration of the Misseriya has already begun.

In such an environment, any security incident could derail the CPA process. The parties must therefore demonstrate responsible leadership and recognize that difficult compromises are required in order to ensure peaceful coexistence among communities. All efforts are being made by the parties concerned, particularly by UNMIS, to encourage the leaders to agree on a solution as soon as possible.

Other provisions of the CPA require immediate attention. For example, finalizing the demarcation of the North-South border, moving troops away from the common border and the joint monitoring of those zones by the two parties in order to avoid possible tension are necessary to maintain border security between the North and the South.

Popular consultations in the states of Southern Kordofan and the Blue Nile are also being postponed. Parties should pay more attention to those issues, which represent an opportunity to enhance North-South relations and future stability in the North.

It is important to point out that on 6 December the parties signed a framework agreement on the security arrangements for the oil fields and oil installations located south of the current borderline. That agreement stipulates that the Joint Integrated Units will continue to provide security on the external periphery of the oil installations until 9 July 2011, while the security forces of Sudan's National Intelligence and Security Services and the Sudanese police will protect the internal periphery of those installations.

(*spoke in English*)

We are concerned about the recent reports of bombings by the Sudanese armed forces along the border areas between Northern Bahr El Ghazal state and South Darfur and in Western Bahr El Ghazal state. Those attacks are allegedly directed against the Justice and Equality Movement, but they have also resulted in casualties among the Sudan People's Liberation Army.

We urge both Governments to exercise restraint and prevent the situation from escalating. Either party's support to rebel groups against the other constitutes a violation of the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement. Any such accusation should thus be brought to the attention of the appropriate mechanisms established by the CPA, instead of being dealt with unilaterally and militarily. We are encouraged by the discussions held

on that issue during the Ceasefire Joint Military Committee yesterday, 15 December, and the prospective resolution of that dispute during the next Ceasefire Political Commission meeting. However, we need to emphasize that unilateral military action constitutes a threat to the CPA and must stop once and for all.

Restrictions on UNMIS freedom of movement remain a major challenge, notably in Southern Kordofan and Northern Abyei. I urge the Sudanese authorities to prevent such incidents and hold those responsible to account.

UNMIS is also experiencing long delays in the receipt of Sudanese visas for its personnel, including those most needed for the upcoming referendum. The Government of the Sudan currently has a backlog of 348 visa applications for UNMIS. We have taken this up both in Khartoum and here in New York. We urge the Government to clear the pending visa applications without delay.

Although the security situation in Southern Sudan remains relatively calm, it continues to be fragile. We also do not exclude the possibility that the political and security environment could become more tense during and after the referendum.

As the Council is aware, we are working on options for a possible augmentation of United Nations troops in the Sudan to prevent any deterioration in the security situation after the referendum and to increase our capacity to monitor possible ceasefire violations, as well as to protect civilians throughout the mission area. We continue to engage the parties on that issue. In the meantime, UNMIS is increasing its presence in hot spots, using its existing force, redeploying company-size additional troops to Abyei, Southern Kordofan and a new team site near the border between the states of Upper Nile and White Nile.

The integrated Joint Operations Centre in Khartoum and the Regional Operations Centre in Juba have been strengthened to enhance information collection and real-time analysis throughout the Mission area and to support both conflict prevention activities and rapid political, military and humanitarian reaction to crisis. We are grateful to the Russian Federation for agreeing to deploy four military helicopters, previously with the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad, to Juba. Their presence will contribute greatly to ensuring the Mission's mobility. As of today, the four helicopters are still in Entebbe, awaiting the permit from the Government of the Sudan to deploy to Juba, which, we understand, might come very soon.

While UNMIS continues those efforts, we must emphasize that the presence of United Nations troops by itself will not be enough to prevent a return to war, should widespread hostilities erupt. Only a demonstrated commitment by the parties to refrain from inflammatory statements, uphold the CPA ceasefire mechanisms and engage in dialogue to settle differences will succeed in maintaining peace.

While the Sudanese authorities bear the primary responsibility for the protection of their citizens, UNMIS has stepped up its protection activities through joint civil-military patrols and initiatives to foster reconciliation at the local level. The overall goal of the UNMIS protection strategy is, first, to prevent, reduce and, when necessary, stop violence against civilian populations in the Mission area; second, to ensure humanitarian access to vulnerable populations; and third, to assist both the Government of the Sudan and the Government of Southern Sudan to assume their primary responsibility to protect civilian populations.

To implement that strategy, it is essential that the Mission be able to identify vulnerable communities and individuals before disputes erupt or escalate. It is also important to ensure State responsibility at all levels -local, regional, national — to address those concerns through dialogue and in consultation with the communities. In light of that, UNMIS — while under the direct supervision of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Haile Menkerios, and benefiting from his direct engagement with the Government at the highest level of Sudanese authorities, as necessary — has decentralized its protection activities at state and regional levels.

Given the uncertainties of the coming months, the parties, the United Nations and the international community are preparing to prevent, to the extent possible, and to mitigate humanitarian crises. That includes efforts by humanitarian and development agencies to ensure that all population movements across the border are voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable. Returnees from Northern Sudan to Southern Sudan should be able to return in a manner that does not overwhelm the capacity of local communities to absorb them.

UNMIS and the United Nations country team have developed a referendum-related contingency plan for the period from November 2010 to June 2011. In the unlikely event that the referendum leads to large-scale violence, approximately 2.8 million people could be internally displaced and another 3.2 million people may be negatively affected by breakdowns in trade and social service delivery. In that scenario, up to $63 million may be required to provide emergency assistance to those in need. Similar plans are also being prepared by United Nations missions and other United Nations presences in neighbouring countries, particularly by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The outcomes of the referendum and negotiations on post-referendum issues will undoubtedly affect the United Nations presence in the Sudan after the conclusion of the CPA. UNMIS and the United Nations country team are examining possible future conflict dynamics in post-CPA Sudan, particularly in Southern Sudan, where needs for capacity-building and institutional development are paramount. We will make further reference to those issues and possible options for United Nations engagement, particularly in Southern Sudan, in the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General to the Council.

At this crucial stage in the implementation of the CPA, we are encouraged by the continued commitment of both CPA partners to resolve outstanding differences in a peaceful manner. As the events in the early days of 2011 will be unique in the history of the Sudan, we continue to urge all CPA partners to intensify their efforts and provide support to all Sudanese in order to successfully hold the referendum and respect the choice made by the people by endorsing and implementing its outcome.

The President: I thank Mr. Le Roy for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, Chair of the Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan.

Mr. Mkapa: I am grateful for the opportunity to brief the Council in the Southern Sudan referendum as well as to provide clarification on the role of the Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan.

I was present in Nairobi when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed, and it is remarkable that we are about to witness the achievement of one of the Agreement's key milestones, the holding of the Southern Sudan referendum, in less than a month's time. The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement brought peace to a great many people in the Sudan and allowed for the development of the country. Moreover, the Agreement brought relief to the countries and peoples of the region, which were also affected by the North-South conflict in the Sudan. That is no small achievement.

Let me also take this opportunity to welcome the presence of the representatives of the CPA parties who are with us this morning, on whose shoulders rests the responsibility for the successful conclusion of the implementation of the Agreement.

The registration of voters ahead of next month's referendum on the self-determination of Southern Sudan concluded eight days ago, with the exception of a few centres out of country, as Under-Secretary-General Le Roy just stated. The registration process was conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner, despite time constraints and limitations in communications infrastructure and financial resources. The Southern Sudan Referendum Commission and its Bureau based in Juba are to be highly commended for overcoming the many difficulties they faced to conduct the voter registration exercise.

Our field reporting officers on the ground and we ourselves found the process to be generally transparent, with very few cases of rejections reported. No discernable pattern of irregularities were reported either. That should help prepare the ground for a credible referendum on 9 January 2011.

Both parties to the CPA have given important and unequivocal public assurances about respecting the outcome of the referendum. Leaders of both parties have also given assurances about the status of the Southerners in the North and Northerners in the South and that their rights and safety will be protected. As the campaign period gathers momentum, such messages of assurance by political leaders in both the North and the South should be reiterated in order to assuage anxiety among the population regarding the uncertainty of their future, regardless of the outcome of the referendum.

There has been no progress with regard to the holding of the Abyei referendum. The Abyei issue has

become part of the larger post-referendum negotiations led by the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel on the Sudan. We commend the patience shown by the people of Abyei and we urge the parties to redouble their efforts to find a lasting solution to this difficult issue.

Let me conclude by sharing some views on how the Panel sees its role in the lead-up to the referendums. As the Secretary-General conveyed to the Council in September, the Panel's role is to monitor and assess the referendum processes for Southern Sudan and the Abyei area, including the political and security situation on the ground. The Panel will also engage the parties at the appropriate level to take corrective measures and, in close consultation with the Secretary-General, issue public statements on the referendums.

In our encounters with our interlocutors, we have stressed that we do not have a certification mandate. The Panel will focus on playing a good offices role on behalf of the Secretary-General. The Panel will liaise closely with international and national observer groups to ensure that we share as much valuable information as possible.

The President: I thank Mr. Mkapa for his briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mutrif Siddiq.

Mr. Siddiq (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it is my pleasure, as we enter a new Hijri year and look forward to a new Gregorian year, to greet all the peace-loving peoples and States of the world. I also wish to congratulate the President for assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month and for organizing this meeting on the Sudan at this critical and important time.

I also wish to assure the Council that we appreciate, understand and commend the role of the United States of America and other international partners in helping the parties to the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). It is our hope that their role will continue to be constructive and positive, which will help us face and overcome the challenges of the final phase of the CPA and lead to permanent peace and stability in my country. I wish to assure the Council of the commitment of the Government of the Sudan to implementing its obligations, including the referendum on self-determination for Southern Sudan and the reaching of a final settlement on Abyei, in the hope that we will hold a referendum on Abyei as well. It is also our hope that our deliberations today will narrow the differences and viewpoints and that a settlement will be reached on all other pending issues.

Through the periodic reports submitted by the Government of the Sudan on the implementation of the CPA over the past five years, as well as the reports of the Secretary-General and the Assessment and Evaluation Commission, the Council has seen how far we have come and what we have achieved via the mechanisms established by the CPA. We have shown our commitment to implementing all the provisions of the Agreement and to fulfilling its main objective of peace, which is why we now seek effective and sustainable solutions to all pending issues so that the brotherly relations that should obtain between the two parties after the end of the referendum, regardless of its results, shall come to pass.

It is worth noting that the Council has no doubt followed the referendum voter registration process and seen that it take place in a very smooth and transparent manner in the Sudan and in many countries of the diaspora. We will provide the Council with the final status of registration after the Referendum Commission completes its evaluation. The ease with which the registration took place, despite some violations here and there, should prove the commitment of the parties to conducting the referendum and respecting its results.

I am delighted to say that the support and assistance that the Referendum Commission received during the voter registration process will continue. We wish to assure the Council that our financial support for the Commission will not stop and that financing will not be an obstacle to the holding of the referendum. I wish to assure the Council that visas have been approved by the Commission and that the information just provided by Mr. Alain Le Roy should be updated.

As a cardinal pillar of the CPA and one to which we are committed, the referendum should not be considered to be an end in itself; rather, it is a means that should lead us to sustainable peace, stability and security. We are eager to see continued and intensified negotiations between the parties so that we can realize that objective.

As the Council knows, and as has been said before, the settlement of the issue of Abyei is foremost among the pending issues, and we are intensifying our efforts with our partners, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), to reach a settlement acceptable to the parties that will take into consideration the essential issues of citizenship and peaceful coexistence among the tribes of the region. It goes without saying that the settlement will not simply draw land borders or allocate wealth and resources. It will be a settlement between two of the major ethnic groups in the region, the Misseriya and Dinka Ngok tribes. The region has been a bridge connecting the North and South of the country throughout history through such coexistence and interaction between the tribes. That is why we must adopt a comprehensive approach in addressing it, apply wise practices and think positively in order to achieve lasting peace and stability.

The Council might be aware of the fact that two high-level meetings have been held in the past few weeks between the partners at the level of the President of the Republic and the first Vice-President, with the participation and support of former President Thabo Mbeki, Chairman of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel. Despite all these meetings, we have not yet reached a final solution that would ultimately satisfy the people of the region.

However, we must note the danger of any of the parties taking unilateral measures or decisions with respect to this conflict, as that could push the situation into an explosive confrontation, which none of us wish for. While we commend the Security Council, the European Union, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development and the African Union for closely following the case of Abyei, we call on each and every one to pursue their efforts to reach a satisfactory settlement through negotiations. The high-level negotiations between the two parties are our main guarantee that this region will not become a battlefield or an area of future confrontation.

Our emphasis on settling the pre-referendum issues, such as Abyei, border demarcation and the total withdrawal of SPLM forces south of the 1956 borders, has not distracted us from dealing with post-referendum issues such as wealth, citizenship, security, water, foreign debt and assets, and international agreements and instruments.

As the Council is aware, since last year we have engaged in workshops and meetings with our partners, the most recent of which was held in Juba on 13 December. I personally attended that meeting. These meetings will be resumed in Khartoum on 18 December in order to resolve all the issues that the two parties have identified as priorities to be settled before the referendum.

We will also continue to consider the remaining issues in order to settle them before the end of the transitional period on 8 July 2011. At these meetings, we have discussed several issues in detail and made several proposals aimed at resolving these issues. We have also continued our efforts with our partners in the SPLM to achieve final settlements. We do so based on our belief in the inevitability of integration between the North and the South, regardless of whether there is unity or secession.

We note our agreement of 15 November regarding the framework agreement reached under the commendable mediation of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel, headed by Mr. Thabo Mbeki. The salient feature of that agreement is to ensure that there is no return to war but that other strategic options are adopted to strengthen confidence and lay a solid foundation for optimal relations between the North and the South, as determined by the common factors that bring them together irrespective of the result of the referendum. Mr. Le Roy's comments regarding the protection of the oil-producing areas by joint units indicate that we are indeed moving in the right direction.

We firmly believe that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement is the primary responsibility of the two parties. However, given the importance and delicacy of the current stage of negotiations and the complicated, interrelated and cross-cutting nature of the issues, a role must be played by influential countries, the international partners and the international community, in particular the Security Council, in order to build confidence between the parties and not sow seeds of suspicion and doubt between them.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement was indeed a historic achievement. It was not an easy achievement, and we should not squander it today in its final stages of implementation. We recall the difficult negotiations and the patience, dedication and wisdom that led us to accept the right of the people of Southern Sudan to

self-determination. We sacrificed so much for the Agreement, and it is therefore incumbent on us to preserve it as an achievement of which we are proud, as it put an end to war and conflict between the people of my country. In addition, we must seek to fulfil all the provisions of the Agreement in a way that will realize its main objectives.

Regarding the situation in Darfur, I would like to assure the Council that the Government of the Sudan, which considers a comprehensive political settlement to be its main strategic objective, continues to insist on continuing the negotiating process in order to achieve peace and stability for all parties. The Council has followed the position of the Government throughout all the negotiating rounds taking place in Doha, Qatar. At this time and in this Chamber, we wish to express our deep gratitude to Qatar and to commend the Joint African Union-United Nations Chief Mediator for Darfur, Mr. Djibrill Bassolé. We hope that, during this month, we will reach a comprehensive framework agreement for peace in Darfur that will be open for signature to all the other movements when they accept peace and renounce war. We also thank all the countries of the region that have supported that mediation effort.

We hope that the Security Council will take more robust and firm action against the leaders of some of the rebel movements that continue to espouse the military option and to reject the political settlement, especially as set out in resolution 1679 (2006), in which the Council affirmed its willingness to take firm and effective measures against all those who work to obstruct peace. Four years have passed since the adoption of that resolution, and the Council has yet to send a strong message to those who refuse to renounce war and join the peace process in Doha. We heard just now, in the presidential statement (S/PRST/2010/28), encouraging signals that we hope will be a step in the right direction.

We must note that the security situation in Darfur has seen noticeable progress in terms of stability, security and the humanitarian aspect, despite some violations and irresponsible military actions, the abduction of and attacks against humanitarian workers and some members of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). These robberies and provocative, disruptive acts have forced the Sudanese Armed Forces to intervene to put an end to some of these violations, which targeted innocent civilians and imposed fines on them.

We must also note that some rebel movements recently moved some of their forces to Southern Sudan. We have informed our partners of this and are ready to work together to ensure that such acts are stopped so that the relationship between the parties will not be affected.

Despite all that, the humanitarian situation is considerably stable. We are cooperating fully with our brothers from specialized United Nations programmes and agencies in order to deliver assistance to those who need it in Darfur.

In that context, we must also refer to the coordination between the Government of the Sudan and UNAMID, undertaken through the Tripartite Mechanism, which includes the Government of the Sudan, the United Nations and the African Union. That coordination has led to improvements in the deployment of UNAMID which, although it has not reached its full capacity, has greatly improved the security situation, facilitated the delivery of humanitarian assistance and served to reassure those civilians who opted to return to their homes through voluntary repatriation programmes.

As part of those efforts to strengthen security, stability and development in Darfur, on 16 September, the Government adopted a comprehensive integrated strategy for peace and stability in Darfur, of which the Council was duly informed. We are working to implement it in coordination with UNAMID, international partners and the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel. The strategy represents a parallel national effort that is intended to complement, not replace, the Doha forum. One of its goals is to achieve a comprehensive political settlement and to strengthen security through preventive measures in coordination with UNAMID. It also aims to implement short- and long-term development projects to lay the necessary groundwork for displaced persons to voluntarily return to their homes and resume normal lives. The strategy places priority on providing justice and combating impunity in Darfur through all possible forums and mechanisms, including national reconciliation and compensation.

Another goal of the strategy is to restructure humanitarian operations, given that humanitarian relief is a temporary solution and should not constitute a

final settlement or become a way of life. The State has provided large sums of money to support the strategy in order to develop the infrastructure of Darfur. Those resources will serve encourage donors and attract regional and international support to realize the strategy's goals.

Before I conclude, allow me to mention that the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement is steadily moving forward. In that regard, we must commend the State of Kuwait, which recently hosted a conference on the reconstruction of Eastern Sudan, as well as the countries and organizations that participated. We also wish to thank all the donors that made pledges that exceeded $3 billion to support construction projects in Eastern Sudan. This is a model of regional, bilateral and international cooperation that should be adopted in similar situations.

I wish to reiterate my gratitude for the initiative to convene this meeting. I hope that our deliberations today will help both parties to address the pending issues in a peaceful and seamless manner that satisfies the requirements for peaceful coexistence, integration and communication between Northern and Southern Sudan, whether the choice is made for unity or secession.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Pagan Amum.

Mr. Amum: I am very grateful for the opportunity once again to address the Security Council and to put forward the views of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the Government of Southern Sudan. I also want to thank you, Madam President, and the United States of America for calling this meeting. This is an indication of the Council's continued support for the full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and of its determination to maintain peace and stability in the Sudan.

Since my last visit to the Council, we have witnessed the peaceful completion of the voter registration process for the Southern Sudan referendum. Over 3.6 million people registered in Southern Sudan, the North and among the diaspora, although registration in the North was disappointingly low, owing to the concerns and anxiety of Southern Sudanese living in Northern Sudan. Nonetheless, the completion of the registration process is an important step, and it could not have been done without the support of the United Nations and the international community.

We reiterate our call for the referendum to be conducted on time, on 9 January 2011, given that it is now possible to do so. We also call for its results to be respected and for the parties to the CPA — the National Congress Party (NCP) and the SPLM — to fully cooperate to that end. The Government of Southern Sudan will spare no effort to ensure that the referendum takes place on time and in a peaceful environment. We continue to contribute a disproportionate share of the funds required by the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission. In that regard, we invite our partners in the Government of the Sudan to contribute the amounts to which they previously committed.

I wish to express the gratitude of the Government of Southern Sudan to the Russian Federation for supplying helicopters to the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) in order to support its capacity to provide logistical support for the conduct of the referendum. I must also reiterate our thanks to UNMIS, other United Nations agencies and the international community for the support they are continuing to provide to the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission. We welcome their continued engagement in that process. We call on the Council and on all Member States to respect, recognize and implement the choice of the people of Southern Sudan in the referendum, as that will be the only basis for maintaining peace.

In that context, we welcome the work of the monitoring Panel, which is led by President Mkapa, whose presence here today we appreciate. The work of the Panel to monitor the process and authenticate the referendums' results will ensure stability and a smooth transition to the next phase of the process.

We also welcome recent statements by President Omer Hassan Al-Bashir. As the leader of the country and of the National Congress Party, he has made a commitment to accept the results of the referendum whether the vote leads to secession or unity.

Of course, the referendum is only a milestone along the road to our shared goal of lasting peace and prosperity for all in the Sudan. We remain committed to a peaceful, stable and prosperous future for the people of the Sudan, whether as one country or as two separate States. We therefore share Council members' concerns

about the ongoing lack of progress in, and the slow process of, discussing post-referendum arrangements.

There is an urgent need to clearly define the terms of the relationship between Northern and Southern Sudan after the CPA interim period expires. Regardless of the outcome of the referendum, we are grateful for the continued support of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel, led by President Thabo Mbeki, and welcome his efforts to finalize a framework agreement that will lay out the general principles that will govern the future relationship between Southern and Northern Sudan as two sovereign States, if the choice of the people of Southern Sudan is separation. That will help guide North-South relations through the referendum period and set the stage for productive negotiations on all outstanding issues. We remain prepared to engage in negotiations at any time and in any location, and recommit ourselves today to spare no effort to reach agreement with our partners the NCP on all the matters before us.

When we last appeared before the Council (see S/PV.6425), we were hopeful that soon thereafter the parties would be able to reach agreement on the matter of Abyei. Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of President Mbeki and his team, we have been unable to do so. We continue to see two possible options. The first would be to hold a referendum in Abyei, consistent with the terms of the CPA. It is still technically feasible to hold a referendum, which we believe could be organized relatively quickly given the size of the Ngok Dinka community in Abyei, if our NCP partners are willing to abide by the terms of the CPA. As we have stated many times, the referendum would be part of an arrangement giving clear guarantees to the Misseriya and other nomads of their right to graze and transit through the area. The second option would be to transfer Abyei to Southern Sudan by Sudanese presidential decree, just as it was transferred in 1905 by administrative order. Again, this would be done alongside an agreement on the rights of the Misseriya.

Any agreement on Abyei must respect earlier agreements, including the CPA and the tribunal ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration of 2009, which was accepted in its entirety by both parties. That ruling has already granted a portion of the Ngok Dinka territory to the Misseriya, going beyond what was agreed under the process prescribed by the CPA itself. At this stage, the issue is not territory, but rather how to ensure that the needs of the Misseriya communities are best addressed and the rights of the Ngok Dinka people are respected.

We believe that it is possible to reach an agreement that addresses all concerns. However, we are worried that the Misseriya themselves may not yet be fully aware of the extent to which their rights would be protected, either following a referendum in which the Ngok Dinka community would exercise its right to decide whether to remain in the North or return to the South, or under an arrangement whereby Abyei would be transferred to the South. The Government of Southern Sudan is committed to reaching agreement on the question through negotiations. We stress the urgency of doing this quickly, particularly given the rapidly approaching referendum in Southern Sudan.

The Government of Southern Sudan shares the Council's concern about the situation in Darfur and the potential spillover effects on North-South relations of renewed military action there. We fully support the Darfur peace process and reiterate our call on all parties to re-engage in negotiations. The Government of Southern Sudan supports a comprehensive solution to the Darfur question, which must involve an inclusive, all-party process. An agreement between one party only and the Government in Khartoum does not promote this. Furthermore, there can be no military solution in Darfur. A resolution can come about only through political negotiations aimed at reaching a comprehensive agreement that would lead the Sudan into a democratic transformation. There can be no stability through exclusion.

For its part, regardless of the outcome of the referendum, the Government of Southern Sudan has a clear interest in stability across the rest of the Sudan, including Darfur. Given our socio-economic interdependence with the North, we have an interest in promoting peace and stability in both the South and the North of the Sudan. We maintain contact with the parties to the conflict in Darfur in order to encourage them to negotiate an end to the war. We believe that all parties in Darfur should return to negotiations with the aim of establishing a comprehensive peace.

In this context, the Government of Southern Sudan would also welcome discussions with its partners in Khartoum to strengthen existing agreements on the provision of mutual security guarantees. These

should include commitments that both sides shall refrain from supporting military proxies or other armed groups that promote instability in either region. On behalf of the SPLM, I clearly state here that we have no interest in supporting armed groups, and would expect the National Congress Party to declare the same in relation to proxy groups that it may be supporting in the South. Given the high stakes of the coming period, both parties must commit to the maintenance of stability and peace.

I thank Council members for their ongoing concern and interest at this critical time in our history. I thank you sincerely, Madame President, for holding this meeting and for your own personal interest in and support for peace in the Sudan. I wish to conclude by saying clearly to the Council that, although we have made much progress, the outcome we all desire is still not yet completely assured, but that, with the Council's help and continued support, we can achieve sustainable peace in the Sudan. The Security Council must remain vigilant at this critical moment of our history.

The President: I thank Mr. Amum for his statement.

I now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I thank His Excellency President Mkapa for his report and Mr. Le Roy for his briefing. I also welcome the presence in the Chamber this morning of Their Excellencies Mr. Siddiq and Mr. Amum, and thank them for their positive statements.

As we enter the last few weeks before the referendum on self-determination for Southern Sudan, it is vital for the parties to fulfil their commitment to full and timely implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and for the international community to remain united in its support. We welcome the commitments we have heard from the parties today.

We also welcome the steady progress of preparations towards the 9 January Southern Sudan referendum. In particular, we are encouraged by the process of registration, which ended in-country on 8 December. We also welcome the assessment of the Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan that the registration process was transparent and free from organized manipulation and that it has provided the basis for a credible referendum. We urge the parties to ensure that this good progress is maintained.

Nevertheless, some very important issues remain to be resolved. In particular, we are disturbed by the lack of progress on Abyei. Tensions there continue to rise in the absence of a political settlement. We urge both parties to show flexibility and leadership in coming to an agreement on this as soon as possible. We also remind both parties of the urgent need to come to agreement on other issues of fundamental and long-term importance to both North and South. It is particularly important to reach agreement on citizenship, which will reassure the Sudanese people in both North and South that their rights will be respected whatever the outcome of the referendum. In addition, we continue to have concerns about human rights issues in the Sudan more generally, and we stress the need for fundamental rights for all citizens, including women, to be respected.

We recognize that, as Minister Siddiq said this morning, the Sudanese parties have come far over the past five years and will continue to need to work together for the peace and prosperity of all Sudanese people, whatever the outcome of the referendum. We note the firm commitment that the parties have made not to return to violence, and we strongly urge them, in line with that commitment, to respect each other's security and refrain from any action that seeks to undermine that. It is more important than ever to show restraint at this critical time.

Finally, I would like briefly to address the situation in Darfur. It is vital that this Council does not lose sight of events there. We must work intensively with all parties involved towards a peaceful and inclusive political settlement and justice and reconciliation in the region. We welcome the role played by Chief Mediator Djibril Bassolé and the support of the Government of Qatar, and we urge all rebel groups to join the peace process without delay and without preconditions. This Council should be prepared to consider firm measures against those who refuse to do so.

In that context, we are concerned by the resumption of hostilities between the Sudanese armed forces and the Sudan Liberation Army Minni Minawi faction, and we call upon both sides to uphold their commitment to peace.

We remain deeply concerned about the security situation in Darfur, including the recent violence in Khor Abeche and other incidents resulting in the displacement of civilians. Access for humanitarian workers and peacekeepers must be improved in Darfur, and kidnappings must come to an end.

Mr. Rugunda (Uganda): I thank Under-Secretary-General Le Roy and the Chairman of the Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan, His Excellency President Benjamin Mkapa, for their comprehensive briefings. I also thank the representatives of the Government of the Sudan, Mr. Mutrif Siddiq, and of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, Mr. Pagan Amum, for their statements.

The full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) remains key to peace and stability in the Sudan and the whole region. There have been important achievements since the signing of the CPA, and we commend the parties on those aspects of the Agreement that have been implemented to date. Uganda welcomes the commitments made by the parties to resolve the outstanding issues. It is essential that those issues — especially Abyei — be resolved for the sake of peace, security and stability in the Sudan.

One issue that requires continued leadership is ensuring that the referendum in Southern Sudan is held on time and is conducted in a free and fair atmosphere and that the outcome credible and respected. We welcome the continued commitments expressed by the parties to holding the referendum and to respecting the results.

We welcome the successful conclusion of voter registration on 8 December. We were encouraged by the high turnout of eligible voters for registration. We encourage the Referendum Commission to ensure that other steps in the process are carried out in a timely and transparent manner.

Uganda considers it essential that a workable agreement be reached on post-referendum arrangements. In that regard, we commend the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel, under the chairmanship of His Excellency President Mbeki, for its work. The Panel's facilitation of the negotiations remains important for their successful and timely completion.

The support of the international community remains crucial during this period. The region is committed to supporting the parties. The recent summit of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), held on 23 November in Addis Ababa, reiterated the commitment of IGAD member States to support the full implementation of the CPA, but it also emphasized the need for continued support of the Sudan during the post-referendum period for peace, stability, democracy and development in the Sudan.

Finally, Uganda appreciates the work of the Secretary-General's Panel on Referenda in the Sudan, led by President Mkapa, and we also commend the United Nations Mission in the Sudan for the good work done in the Sudan.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Le Roy, President Mkapa, the State Minister for Humanitarian Affairs of the Sudan Mr. Mutrif Siddiq, and the Secretary-General of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, Mr. Pagan Amum, for their presence and their presentations.

Now, a few weeks before the referendum, everything should be in place for the voting to take place on the scheduled date. The authorities of Khartoum and Juba, the Referendum Commission and all stakeholders must make every possible effort so that that vital stage in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement can be completed.

The concern about the preparations must be assuaged. In that regard, we welcome the commitment made by the parties on 15 November not to return to violence to settle their disputes. However, the bombings by the Government of the Sudan on the border of the states of Bahr el Ghazal and South Darfur in recent days, which caused displacements of the civilian populations, are of concern. We call on the parties to maintain their mutual trust and to immediately stop their violence.

The voting process must be fair and transparent. The deployment to the Sudan of several election observer missions, of the European Union in particular, will make it possible to have indicators of the conditions in which the referendum is taking place. It is up to the Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda, led by President Mkapa — to whose work I would like to pay tribute — to provide the international community with a clear view of the overall referendum proceedings.

We took note of the Panel's encouraging statement at the end of the registration period. However, we also noted the Panel's concerns with regard to the people's committees in the North, which apparently dissuaded some potential voters. We are paying close attention to the observations and future conclusions of Mr. Mkapa's Panel.

Preparing for the referendum is also preparing for its aftermath. We pay tribute to the efforts of President Mbeki and of the African Union's High-Level Implementation Panel for holding discussions on the issue of Abyei and the post-referendum matters. However, we are concerned by the lack of agreement at this stage on Abyei. We encourage the parties to continue their efforts and to make, at the appropriate time, the necessary concessions in order to reach an agreement as soon as possible.

We have been informed about the admission to hospital of Special Representative Haile Menkerios. Allow me here once again to commend his work at the head of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) and to wish him a good recovery. We encourage UNMIS to continue its efforts, and we welcome the fact that it has redeployed its staff to strengthen its presence in areas of potential tension.

In the current context, we must not forget Darfur. The war between the Sudanese armed forces and the rebel groups continues, as demonstrated by the deadly fighting in Khor Abeche on 10 and 11 December, which caused more than 10 thousand civilians to be displaced. A political solution is essential. In that context, the Council must continue to provide its support to the joint mediation efforts in Doha. It is unacceptable for the two main rebel groups to continue to remain outside that process. We call upon them to rejoin the discussions without delay or preconditions.

For its part, UNAMID must continue its efforts to protect civilians, pursuant to its mandate. We urge the force to step up its efforts to strengthen its position and to implement, at all levels and in all circumstances, its strategy for protecting civilians. In that respect, progress is still possible and necessary. Obstacles to the force's free movement must also be lifted.

I will conclude by reminding members, a few days after Prosecutor Moreno-Ocampo's worrying briefing to the Council, that there can be no peace without justice in Darfur. The crimes committed there cannot go unpunished. We therefore call for cooperation by all States with the International Criminal Court pursuant to Council resolution 1593 (2005).

Mr. Nishida (Japan): I would like to thank His Excellency President Mkapa, Chair of the Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan, and Under-Secretary-General Le Roy for their insightful briefings. I would also like to extend my appreciation to the Honourable Mutrif Siddiq, State Minister for Humanitarian Affairs of the Republic of the Sudan, and the Honourable Pagan Amum, Minister of Peace and Comprehensive Peace Agreement Implementation of the Government of Southern Sudan, for their statements.

Japan, at the outset, welcomes the fact that the registration process for the Southern Sudan referendum was concluded peacefully in the country. We also highly value the commitments by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) parties to conduct the Southern Sudan referendum on 9 January next year as planned and to respect its results regardless of the outcome.

The international community is closely watching developments in the Sudan. However, the most important element is political will and commitment on the part of the parties concerned, and I trust that the Sudanese parties can and will maintain their roles in that regard. It is encouraging that the African Union (AU) and subregional organizations are making significant contributions as well.

Japan also appreciates the work of President Mkapa and President Mbeki, Chair of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel, in support of the efforts of the CPA parties.

To alleviate possible concerns and anxiety among the people in the South, the population should be informed in advance regarding the entire process and expected time period between voting, counting and announcement of the final results. It is also advisable that the Panel on the Referenda consult beforehand with the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC), the CPA parties, President Mbeki, the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) and other referendum observers concerning arrangements after the voting has been completed. Japan is ready to assist in the conduct of a free and fair referendum by dispatching its referendum monitors at the end of this month.

Japan welcomes the intensive high-level consultations between the CPA parties to discuss the Abyei issue and other post-referendum issues, including citizenship and natural resources. We urge both parties to accelerate those discussions in order to resolve pending issues.

It is essential to maintain the good relationship between North and South beyond the interim period of the CPA in order to uphold stability in the Sudan. To that end, the international community should continue to assist both parties. For its part, Japan has decided to make a new disbursement of approximately $70 million for humanitarian assistance.

Concerning Darfur, Japan reiterates its call for Darfuri armed groups, such as the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) Abdul Wahid faction, to participate in the negotiations under the auspices of the Doha peace process and engage constructively on behalf of the people of Darfur. We are concerned by recent incidents, which have generated further displacement of internally displaced persons. It is our hope that that will not affect North-South relations. The security situation in Darfur and along the border are matters of great concern. We encourage UNMIS and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur to maintain their firm commitment to the protection of civilians.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): My delegation is grateful for the briefings that we have heard this morning and welcomes this morning's constructive discussion. We believe that, whatever the outcome of the referendum may be, it will not only determine the future and status of the Southern Sudan, but will also impact significantly on the overall political situation in the region.

The Russian Federation hopes that the results of the referendum will prepare the groundwork for the post-conflict settlement process and the further sustainable development of the Sudan. We welcome the strong commitment by the Government of the Sudan to implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, including the peaceful and timely holding of the referendum on self-determination for the South of the country.

My delegation notes the parties' peaceful and orderly conduct of the voter registration process for the referendum. We agree with the assessment of the Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan that completion of that process will lay the foundation for the voting on 9 January 2011.

The Russian Federation will respect whatever choice is made by the people of the Southern Sudan, but it is important that outsiders not prejudge the results of the referendum. We must bear in mind that the counting process for the referendum is likely to take a certain amount of time. My country is counting on the constructive role that the Secretary-General's Panel is called upon to play in that respect. We welcome the ongoing dialogue among the Sudanese parties on a broad range of issues of importance in the post-referendum period.

For the Russian Federation, the matter of priority is settlement of the Abyei situation. We are convinced that the Sudanese parties are capable of resolving the broad range of disagreements that have arisen among them, while counting on the willingness of the international community to provide all necessary support.

Future cooperation among the Sudanese parties is key to the full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, including the six-month transition period following the referendum. What is most important is to maintain peace in the Sudan, thus guaranteeing stability in the subregion. Of course, the chances of achieving such an outcome would improve if a general political agreement in Darfur could be reached as soon as possible.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): I should first like to thank President Mkapa for his comprehensive briefing and also Under-Secretary-General Le Roy. We are pleased by the presence of State Minister Siddiq and Mr. Amum, Secretary-General of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), and thank them for their presentations.

Last week, Austrian Foreign Minister Spindelegger visited the Sudan and had talks with senior representatives of the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and with President Mbeki. Minister Spindelegger came back with the understanding that both sides are committed to holding the referendum on time, but that the overall process of Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) implementation and the political situation in the North and the South remain fragile.

Austria therefore considers it important for the international community to send positive messages: to Khartoum that there is a chance to enter into a new phase of relations with the international community, once the CPA has been implemented; and to the South that the international community is ready to assist with capacity-building, and humanitarian and development cooperation, provided of course that the SPLM-leadership does not take any action that could lead to a military escalation. At the same time, more specifically, Austria is convinced that there will be a strong need for the United Nations and other international actors, such as the European Union, to be actively engaged in peacebuilding in the south in the post-referendum period, and also in the north if so desired.

We welcome the substantive progress in the preparations for the referendum, in particular the completion of the voter registration and its peaceful and orderly conduct. In that regard, we highly appreciate and fully support the work of the high-level monitoring Panel. The European Union has deployed an election observation mission, which also observed the registration process.

With regard to post-referendum arrangements, we are particularly concerned about the inability to resolve the problem of citizenship, as that could produce a dangerous hotspot. Austria has offered technical expertise in the area of citizenship. Upon the invitation of the parties, we discussed that offer with interlocutors in the north and the south in October, as well as during the recent visit by our Foreign Minister. Nevertheless, further progress is needed, in particular in the preparations for the referendum in Abyei. Preparations also have to take place for the popular consultations in the Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states. Strengthening the rule of law, ending impunity and ensuring human rights for all will be important in that process in order to guarantee lasting peace and stability. The full inclusion of women in those processes is also of very great importance.

On Monday, 13 December, the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union expressed its readiness to step up engagement with the Government of the Sudan and to establish a long-term dialogue. The European Union and its member States, including Austria of course, attach importance to finding a lasting solution to the Sudan's debt burden. At the Foreign Affairs Council, the European Union committed to examine closely possible support for an international debt relief effort.

In view of the tense security situation in the south caused by rebel movements, military activity and an influx of people moving from north to south, we call on the leadership of the SPLM and the NCP to avert conflict, ensure regional stability and protect civilians. Contingency planning by the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) is important. The freedom of movement is crucial for UNMIS to fulfil its tasks.

Austria strongly supports the facilitation of the African Union High-Level Panel, under the leadership of President Thabo Mbeki, as well as the work of Joint African Union-United Nations Chief Mediator for Darfur Djibrill Bassolé. We urge all parties to work on ceasing hostilities and on making progress in the Doha negotiations.

We particularly condemn the abduction of peacekeepers and humanitarian workers and the violence against civilians in and around camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). In that regard, we welcome the release of three Latvian nationals working for the World Food Programme. We demand the immediate release of a Hungarian peacekeeper in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). We urge all parties to allow free access to everyone in need of humanitarian assistance.

UNAMID has an important role to play in protecting civilians. It needs the full support of the Government of the Sudan and all other parties involved. The safe and voluntary return of a high number of IDPs in Darfur must be ensured. We strongly support all efforts to strengthen mechanisms to combat impunity and promote justice, accountability and reconciliation.

Mr. Onemola (Nigeria): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for organizing this important meeting on the Sudan. Let me also thank Under-Secretary-General Alain Le Roy for his briefing on the preparations for the referendums to be held in the Sudan on 9 January 2011.

Nigeria welcomes the presence here of former President Benjamin Mkapa, whose new role will be to chair the Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan. We have great confidence in his ability to discharge the duties entrusted to him. Let me also welcome His Excellency Mr. Mutrif Siddiq, State

Minister at the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs of the Sudan, as well as Mr. Pagan Amum, Secretary General of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). I thank them for their respective perspectives.

The various accounts we have heard this morning are not only reassuring, they also provide affirmation of the willingness and commitment of the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) vis-à-vis their obligations. Indeed, the statements suggest that the preparations for the conduct of free, fair and credible referendums are on track, in particular in southern Sudan. The conclusion of the voter registration exercise was therefore a significant milestone, for which we commend both the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission and the Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau.

In the current circumstances, there is an obligation to encourage the parties to the CPA to dissipate the climate of fear and distrust and create confidence in the referendums, which are just 24 days away. The first step towards achieving that is for the parties to cease all hostilities and military activities, in particular the recent bombings in the Kiir River Valley. The parties to the CPA, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/National Congress Party and the SPLM, must redouble their efforts and remain committed to the full implementation of the Agreement.

The negotiations launched on post-referendum arrangements following the memorandum of understanding of 23 June, with the help of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel, led by President Thabo Mbeki, should by now be producing substantive outcomes. Indeed, the four working groups set up to organize the negotiations should intensify their engagement on border demarcation, citizenship, wealth-sharing, economic cooperation, grazing rights and security.

The appointment of the Abyei Referendum Commission and the commencement of the popular consultations in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states are also important, in particular as both processes are provided for in the CPA. We urge the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission to expeditiously complete the printing of ballot papers for the exercise in a transparent manner in order to bolster confidence in the process. It is important that clarity is achieved as soon as possible on the post-referendum status of southerners in the north and northerners in the south. The rhetoric should be turned down.

Both parties have an obligation to seek an equitable and mutually beneficial mode of peaceful coexistence, either in unity or separately. The United Nations and the international community have a prominent role to play in ensuring free and fair referendums and a suitable outcome. It is also critical that we define the framework for interaction and dialogue between the north and the south before the referendums are held. We urge the parties to remove all restrictions on the movement of the personnel of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan.

On Darfur, Nigeria welcomes the intensification of the discussions to reach a peace agreement. It is encouraging that the final peace agreement between the Sudanese Government and the rebel Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) will be signed on 19 December. We commend Joint Chief Mediator Bassolé in that regard and urge both the LJM and the Sudan Liberation Movement, led by Abdel Wahid el-Nur, to rejoin the peace process. We are pleased that the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur is speeding up the necessary steps to establish the ceasefire commission and the joint monitoring mechanism.

Finally, we thank Member States that have committed their troops and those that have provided logistical and technical expertise. That will go a long way in helping to solve some of the logistical problems currently confronting the preparations for the referendum in the Sudan.

Mr. Issoze-Ngondet (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank you, Madam President, for having organized this meeting just a few weeks before the referendum to be held in Southern Sudan on 9 January 2011. We also thank President Mkapa and Mr. Alain Le Roy for their briefings, which usefully addressed the three main concerns relating to the question of Southern Sudan: the referendum process, the developments in the negotiations on post-referendum arrangements, and the ongoing discussions among the parties on the status of Abyei.

We welcome the presence of Minister Mutrif Siddiq of the Sudan and of the Secretary-General of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), Mr. Pagan Amum.

The voter registration process, which was carried out in peaceful and harmonious conditions, was completed on 8 December. That marked a decisive turning point in the preparations for the 9 January 2011 referendum. It is also proof of the will of both parties to pursue the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Gabon welcomes those steps and encourages the parties to continue working in that direction.

That positive momentum, which has been reinforced by the preparations, leads us to believe that there will be a credible, transparent and free referendum and that its results will be accepted by all. We know that we will be able to count on the leadership of President Mkapa, and we reiterate our support for him.

However, we are concerned by the difficulties the Referendum Commission is encountering in securing its budget. My delegation urges the parties to fulfil their financial obligations in that area, so as to enable the Commission to fulfil its mission.

With regard to post-referendum arrangements, the problem posed by the serious delays in the negotiations — especially with regard to the complete demarcation of the North-South border, the freedom of movement of the population, and the issues of citizenship and wealth-sharing — show the scale of the task still ahead of us, if we want to achieve lasting peace in the Sudan. Gabon is pleased to see that the efforts of President Mbeki have led to the establishment of a framework that can guide discussions on those important issues.

However modest that progress may be, it should be supported. In that context, we encourage the parties to reach an agreement on those issues as soon as possible in order to ensure continued cooperation between the North and South, whatever the outcome of the referendum.

The negotiations on the Abyei referendum are at a standstill. There are too many areas of disagreement and time is running out. Gabon still believes that those talks must be intensified. The initiative of President Mbeki to regularly bring together the leaders from Khartoum and Juba to discuss the issues should be welcomed. My delegation strongly supports that strategy. We are convinced that a definitive agreement on Abyei could serve as a catalyst for overcoming the other lingering challenges. The Council must continue encouraging the parties in their efforts aimed at overcoming those challenges.

I could not conclude without praising the important role played by the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) in the security, political and humanitarian sectors. By ensuring the protection and freedom of movement of populations, the Mission has been able to create an environment favourable to the peace process. We encourage the parties to cooperate fully with UNMIS.

We cannot remain indifferent to the situation in Darfur, where the peace process has been further delayed and remains without results. Gabon supports the joint efforts of the United Nations and African Union to restore peace in the region. We welcome the commitment of the Government of the Sudan to take an active role in those efforts. We also encourage the rebel movement to participate in the peace process.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): I warmly welcome President Benjamin Mkapa and thank him for today's briefing and for his important work at the head of the Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan. I ask him to kindly convey our appreciation to his fellow panellists as well.

I note with appreciation the statements made by Minister Mutrif Siddiq and Mr. Pagan Amum and extend my thanks to Under-Secretary-General Alain Le Roy for his detailed and comprehensive briefing.

We welcome the recent positive developments in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) The voter registration for the Southern Sudan referendum has been completed in a peaceful manner and seems to have reached a substantial portion of Southern Sudanese voters.

Statements and efforts have been made and are being made by both sides to prevent the use of force to settle disputes between them, including an agreement to employ Joint Integrated Units in the protection of oil fields. Although slow, negotiations on post-referendum issues are progressing, and the CPA parties seem to remain engaged in them.

However, there remain important concerns, such as insufficient funding for the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission, the recent instability in the north of Bahr el Ghazal and the mounting tensions in Abyei.

In Darfur, there are also reasons for concern. It is worrisome, for instance, that the Darfur Peace Agreement has been further eroded with the resumption of hostilities between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Sudan Liberation Army/Mini Minawi. Also to be lamented are the continued hostilities between other parties, as well as restrictions to humanitarian access. Those and other concerns must be urgently and properly addressed by the parties, so that the referenda can take place in an atmosphere where there is at least a minimum level of political and security stability.

We are confident that the Sudanese leadership will rise to the challenge of navigating the difficult waters of the coming weeks and bringing Sudan safely ashore. That requires, first and foremost, that all possible measures be taken to hold a timely, free and fair referendum in Southern Sudan and implement its results. That is the foundation for sustainable peace in Sudan and is therefore indispensable.

Also key is to find a peaceful solution for Abyei. We call on the parties to show maximum flexibility and statesmanship in addressing the issue.

Ensuring the safety and respecting the rights of minorities in the North and the South is of utmost importance. The people of Sudan have the right to safety and peace.

Lastly, the parties will need patience and courage to successfully negotiate a number of key post-referendum arrangements.

In all those demanding tasks, the United Nations role is an important one. We hope that all Sudanese parties will continue to cooperate with this Organization. The partnership between the United Nations and the African Union (AU) is also crucial. We reiterate our support for the work of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel.

As this is probably the last time the Council will meet in the presence of the CPA parties before the referendum, I hope those central messages will be heeded and fully taken into account when they make decisions in the next weeks that will shape the future of Sudan and the subregion. We are confident that they fully understand their important responsibility and are willing and able to play their historic role as peacemakers.

Ms. Čolaković (Bosnia and Herzegovina): I wish to join other delegations in thanking Under-Secretary-General Alain Le Roy and President Benjamin Mkapa, Chair of the Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan, for their comprehensive and informative briefings. We welcome the participation of His Excellency Mr. Mutrif Siddiq, State Minister at the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs of the Sudan, and Mr. Pagan Amum, Secretary General of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement.

I would like to reiterate Bosnia and Herzegovina's support for the full and timely implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). At this stage, it is critical that the CPA parties redouble their efforts to fulfil their commitments and obligations.

Bearing in mind the tight referendum calendar, it is of the utmost importance to get all procedural work finished in a timely manner. We therefore call upon the parties to prevent any further delays in the referendum process. With regard to the resolution of the issue of Abyei, we are concerned that the parties have not yet agreed over the eligibility of voters.

As far as the post-referendum process is concerned, the establishment of working groups on wealth-sharing, citizenship, security and international legal instruments, as well as the anticipated establishment of a joint secretariat for negotiations, are positive steps. However, the process should be conducted more expeditiously.

We welcome the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the African Union Panel in facilitating and intensifying the negotiations between the parties on outstanding issues. It is essential that the parties continue dialogue in a spirit of compromise in order to close the differences on substantial CPA issues, including borders, revenue sharing, citizenship and Abyei.

We commend the assistance and engagement of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) in the process of preparing and conducting the referendums, as well as its technical and logistical support to the process. We are encouraged by the contingency planning of UNMIS to address challenges that may arise during this critical time.

Finally, Bosnia and Herzegovina fully supports the efforts made by UNMIS in the protection of civilians. In that regard, we call upon both parties to remove all restrictions on UNMIS's freedom of movement and to allow UNMIS to exercise its mandate.

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): Over the past five years, the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) have worked together peacefully to address their issues and take this historic rapprochement forward. There have been successes and there have been failures, but through the ups and downs the parties have stayed the course and, for the most part, stability has prevailed. We commend the parties for their commitment to peace and the courage they have shown in difficult circumstances.

We have come to the final stage of CPA implementation. At this point, all efforts must focus on ensuring that the referendums in Southern Sudan and Abyei are free, fair, transparent, credible and held on time and in a peaceful manner. These points are all crucial, since a result that is legitimately contested will be controversial not only in the Sudan, but also in the eyes of international public opinion. In this context, we welcome the conclusion of the voter registration process.

On the other hand, once the process is concluded properly, all parties concerned should respect the outcomes of the referendums. Turkey welcomes the very high-level statements made in that regard in recent days. We also welcome the political commitment made by the parties to finding peaceful solutions to all outstanding matters, never again resorting to war, and not undermining one another's security. These are all very important political pronouncements and must be followed through.

The future of the Sudan is now in the hands of the Sudanese. They will make their choice at the referendums, but whatever the outcome of the voting, all Sudanese people, regardless of their race or religion and be they in the North or the South, will continue to be interdependent. The need to find solutions that ensure peaceful coexistence among diverse communities will not change after January; indeed, it will become more immediate. That is why comprehensively addressing all post-referendum arrangements is crucial, and we welcome the progress already made in this regard. We encourage the parties to continue to engage on these issues after the referendums as well.

Abyei is a crucial issue, and a negotiated, balanced and viable solution must be found. The parties also have to provide ongoing reassurances that the rights of all vulnerable populations at this sensitive time will be safeguarded. The international community and the United Nations stand ready to support all these efforts, but ultimately peace must come from within. No amount of outside support can replace or substitute for the political will of the Sudanese stakeholders themselves to pave the way to a peaceful future.

With regard to Darfur, Turkey condemns all attacks on civilians, humanitarian workers and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, and calls for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. We urge all rebel movements in Darfur to join the peace process in Doha without further delay and without preconditions. The humanitarian situation cannot be addressed properly until a steady state of security is attained, and that will be impossible so long as rebel groups prefer military aggression to political dialogue. There have to be real consequences for rebel groups that propagate conflict. Intransigence cannot be accepted. Turkey fully supports the African Union/United Nations joint mediation effort.

It is not only the Sudan that is rapidly approaching a critical juncture; the resolve of the international community to maintaining peace and security will also be tested in the days ahead. We have in place a multitude of mechanisms, processes and structures, as well as high-level engagement. Translating that high level of effort into success will not be easy. The CPA is not just a series of timelines that need to be met; it is a political arrangement that is most likely leading to the break-up of a very large country and its peoples into two. This will be a potentially traumatic experience, the benefits of which may become apparent only in the long term.

Having come so far, we must not now underestimate the challenges that lie ahead in the post-CPA period, including with regard to the massive task of State-building in the Southern Sudan. In the final analysis, the Security Council's main responsibility is the maintenance of international peace and security. We hope that its continued political involvement in the process will ultimately be helpful in advancing that essentially important goal.

In closing, let me express Turkey's ongoing commitment to peace and stability in the Sudan and the region, and our full support for the invaluable efforts exerted by the United Nations and the African Union.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank Mr. Le Roy for his extensive briefing. I

join previous speakers in thanking Chairman Mkapa for his briefing and his colleagues for their efforts in the Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan. I also thank Minister Siddiq and Mr. Amum for their statements.

Only a few weeks remain until the deadline set out by the leaders of the Sudan in the historic 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) to hold a referendum on the self-determination of Southern Sudan. Earlier deadlines have been met thanks to the cooperation of the parties to the CPA and the outstanding efforts of international and regional organizations, including the United Nations, the African Union and the League of Arab States.

The completion of the voter registration process has been a positive step, accompanied by other processes that have taken place. That reflects the Sudanese leadership's commitment to the people and to the international community not to have any recourse to violence, to respect the provisions of the CPA and to respect the results of the referendum. Those commitments have been reaffirmed on many occasions.

While paying tribute to those efforts and to the sacrifices made by all parties, we appeal today more than ever for a continuing commitment to those processes, which have put an end to a decades-long war that has had many victims and caused destruction and disasters. We are all aware of the high price paid by all. Let us hope that there is no return to war. We call upon the international community to continue to support the Sudan, to understand its needs and to provide it with political and economic assistance. There are many issues that need to be followed up, including, of course, the status of Abyei, post-referendum period issues, such as citizenship, distribution of oil resources, water and the debt burden.

The referendum is not and should not be an end in itself. Coexistence and cooperation between the North and the South must continue in all circumstances, whatever the outcome of the referendum. It is our firm hope that the referendum will take place fairly and peacefully, allowing people to determine their own future.

We would like to take this opportunity to commend the efforts of Qatar, which has been hosting the peace talks on Darfur. It is our hope that all parties will take part in those negotiations in order to achieve a final settlement, which has been long awaited and which we earnestly hope for.

As we approach the new year, we should acknowledge the many electoral deadlines that States in the region will be meeting. We understand the close relationships among those deadlines and other important dates, as well as the importance of eliminating violence perpetrated by the Lord's Resistance Army. We call for the implementation of border security agreements reached between countries of the region, such as that between the Sudan and Chad, because they can only help stability in the region.

We would also like to pay tribute to the United Nations Mission in the Sudan and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. We reassert the need to ensure that there is agreement by all parties before there is an increase in the international forces contingents. We wish to pay tribute to the efforts of Mr. Mbeki, Mr. Mkapa, Mr. Gambari, Mr. Bassolé and other players and States in these critical and fateful times that the Sudan is going through.

Mr. Yang Tao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): It is encouraging that today the Council members are joined by the representatives of Northern and Southern Sudan, Under-Secretary-General Le Roy and Mr. Mkapa to deliberate on important issues concerning the Sudan.

Maintaining peace, stability and development in the Sudan is in the interest the Sudanese people. It is also conducive to peace and development in the region and on the African continent. Since the Council held a high-level meeting on the Sudan last month (see S/PV.6425), the peace process in the Sudan continues to make progress. Voter registration for the referendum in Southern Sudan has concluded smoothly. We commend Northern and Southern Sudan, the African Union and the United Nations Secretariat for their efforts to that end.

We hope that Northern and Southern Sudan will retain their momentum, accelerate preparations for the referendums and ensure that the referendums are conducted in a peaceful, free, transparent and fair manner, in compliance with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. We call on the international community to create favourable conditions for the referendums and refrain from prejudging the outcome.

No party should take any unilateral action. No matter what the outcome might be, peace and stability in the Sudan and the region should be ensured. China hopes that the North and the South will cherish the hard-won peace, continue to dialogue and consult as equals and reach an early agreement on border demarcation, Abyei, wealth-sharing and other outstanding issues. That is of great significance to the long-term peace and stability of the Sudan and the region.

China believes that achieving substantive results at an early date in the Darfur political process and reaching a comprehensive political agreement represent the fundamental guarantee for long-term peace, stability and calm in Darfur. Without a robust political process there will be no peace or stability in Darfur, and neither will there be protection of civilians, humanitarian assistance, economic recovery or reconstruction. We once again urge the armed groups outside of the Doha political process to join the peace talks immediately, without any preconditions.

Mr. Puente (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): We too would like to thank Mr. Le Roy and Mr. Mkapa for their very valuable briefings. We would like to particularly welcome the presence of Mr. Mutrif Siddiq and Mr. Pagan Amum with us here today.

Only a few days before the date set for fulfilling one of the key provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the situation still presents significant challenges for the parties and for the international community, as we have heard. We think that the parties have a great advantage because, thanks to the extensive work of important national and international actors, they have been able to identify the specific steps necessary to prevent a return to armed conflict, and they have established the necessary mechanisms for dialogue to guarantee understanding between them.

However, despite encouraging progress, we believe that further efforts are still required to make progress on some fundamental issues.

Without any doubt the immediate priority is holding the referendum on the date set in the Agreement. The completion of voter registration was undoubtedly another encouraging step, and it means we must continue the remaining preparations urgently. Full funding of the Referendum Commission is essential at this stage of the process, and we therefore reiterate our call for parties to fulfil their commitments in that regard.

The referendum and its results must be part of this process and must be absolutely transparent so as to be a convincing reflection of the will of the population of the South. In that context we believe that the role of the Secretary-General's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan is of exceptional relevance, and we thus reiterate our full support for and trust in Mr. Mkapa and the other members of the Panel.

The lack of an agreement on the situation in Abyei is a source of concern because of the volatility it represents for the whole process.

We must by no means overlook the need to establish the bases for post-referendum arrangements, which will be essential to ensure a peaceful transition in the short term and stable relations in the long term.

We would also like to reiterate that the United Nations and the international community must be fully prepared to react expeditiously in any scenario. Although the outlook is encouraging it is still uncertain, and we must remain alert, ready to offer needed assistance and to safeguard the well-being of the civilian population.

We must not lose sight of the situation in Darfur, where conditions on the ground remain worrying, especially with regard to the security situation. We stress once again that it is urgent for hostilities to end and for all parties to the conflict to return to the negotiating table.

To conclude, we would like to stress that, given the difficulties foreseen in the next few weeks, we should repeat our call for calm and prudence. We believe that if the leaders of the Sudan can maintain those virtues, they will make a very valuable contribution to maintaining the stability that their citizens have been calling for these past five years and call for just as forcefully today.

The President: I will now make some remarks in my capacity of representative of the United States.

Let me join others in thanking Under-Secretary-General Le Roy, Chairman Mkapa, Minister Siddiq and Secretary General Amum for their participation today.

In recent months, the Council has shown unprecedented unity in supporting the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The

international community and the members of the Council must continue to speak with one voice on the Sudan or risk creating opportunities for spoilers. With the support of the United Nations and the international community, the referendum registration process has concluded peacefully and credibly. A successful referendum for Southern Sudan on 9 January will be critical to long-term peace and stability in the Sudan. Registration was an important step towards that goal. The effective completion of registration in the Sudan indicates that polling can and must be concluded on schedule.

As we have been reminded today, the status of Abyei remains unresolved. The Chair of the African Union's High-level Implementation Panel, President Mbeki, has been working actively with the CPA parties to find a way forward on this important issue. The United States fully supports his efforts. Any resolution regarding the future of the Abyei area must respect the legally affirmed rights of the people of that region, and it must be reached with the consent of both parties.

We also face additional upcoming challenges, including the effective conduct of the Southern Sudan referendum itself. We urge both sides to ensure a transparent, safe and unobstructed environment for campaigning and polling. We urge the Government of the Sudan and the Government of South Sudan to honour their financial commitments to the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission and the Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau as quickly as possible. This funding is essential to the conduct of the referendum.

The parties must also settle other outstanding CPA issues, such as border demarcation and the conduct of popular consultations for Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states. They must reach agreement on post-CPA issues, including citizenship and the security of minorities and vulnerable populations, such as Northerners in the South and Southerners in the North. On the critical issue of citizenship, the United States strongly urges the parties to reach an agreement that is in line with applicable international obligations and does not arbitrarily deprive any individual of citizenship.

Let me commend the United Nations for its efforts as it helps the CPA parties to implement the referendum, including by procuring and distributing ballots. We call on the parties to the CPA to cooperate with the United Nations Mission in the Sudan and facilitate full and unfettered freedom of access and movement for all United Nations peacekeepers.

Unfortunately, however, this meeting comes at a critical time, one that has been marred by troubling violence. The United States strongly condemns the Government of the Sudan's actions in Khor Abeche, South Darfur. We have heard deeply disturbing reports of Sudanese Armed Forces blocking the movement of civilians, then looting and burning the village. These reports deserve the Council's serious attention and effective responses by the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

The United States wishes to remind all parties, as well as UNAMID and United Nations Headquarters, that UNAMID's Chapter VII mandate authorizes it to carry out its mandated responsibilities with or without the permission of the Government of the Sudan. As we invest billions of dollars and risk peacekeepers' lives, we expect no less.

It is more important than ever that all parties avoid inflammatory words and actions that undermine peace and stability and violate international law. In particular, the United States calls on the Government of the Sudan to immediately halt aerial bombardments. We condemn the bombardments of the 12 and 24 November and 6 December into the Kiir River valley, which resulted in the displacement of at least 1,000 people.

We again call on the Government of the Sudan to end the arrest and harassment of human rights activists and journalists and to release those who have been imprisoned unjustly, including those jailed for exercising such basic rights as freedom of speech, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.

Darfur remains a top priority for the United States. This is reflected in the recent appointment of Ambassador Dane Smith as our Senior Advisor for Darfur. We remain seriously concerned by the violence and humanitarian needs in Darfur, as well as by the lack of accountability. At the same time, all States must redouble their efforts to stem the flow of arms into Darfur and faithfully implement the United Nations sanctions regime.

The United States remains deeply committed to a brighter future for all the people of the Sudan. As President Obama noted at the United Nations in September,

> "What happens in the Sudan in the days ahead may decide whether a people who have endured too much war move forward towards peace or slip backwards to bloodshed. And what happens in the Sudan matters to all sub-Saharan Africa, and it matters to the world."

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.